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Mr. Hall

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Penitentiary Number on Radio That Ray Left Behind

MEMPHIS, March 17 (AP)—Within minutes after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed last April 4, the authorities had in their hands a clue to the identity of James Earl Ray, but they failed to decipher it until after Ray was caught in London last June 8.

The clue was on a transistor pocket radio that was hand-etched with the half-inch-high numerals 00416. And 00416 was the identification number of James Earl Ray in the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo. He was serving a 20-year sentence when he escaped April 23, 1967.

The radio was among effects abandoned by Ray after he shot Dr. King. He dropped his rifle, a set of binoculars and a case that included the radio, at a doorway near the rooming house from which he had fired the shot.

James Beasley of the Shelby County Attorney General's staff said the radio had been turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation with other physical evidence that same night. The numerals, he said, were discovered through tests at the F.B.I. crime laboratory in Washington.

"You can see that someone had tried to file or sand them off the case," Mr. Beasley said. "I couldn't see the numerals until they were pointed out to me, but the F.B.I. found them within 24 hours by treating the case so the numerals showed up."

The six-transistor radio was in a plastic case.

Ray bought the radio in the penitentiary canteen on April 21, two days before he escaped. Prison practice is for inmates

to etch their prison numbers on the back of the case with an electric stylus to prevent theft or arguments over ownership. Ray's prison number, 00416, was etched into the back of his radio. He paid \$9.75 for it.

There was speculation that he bought the radio to carry with him on his escape, so that he could listen to news broadcasts and find out if they were looking for him.

But at Jefferson City, Warden Harold Swenson said he thought Ray had taken it because he was "too cheap to leave anything behind."

After Ray had fled the Memphis rooming house and the police found the Remington Gamemaster rifle, binoculars and personal effects, the F.B.I. was able to trace even laundry marks on underwear to a West Coast laundry. A pair of pliers was also traced to its source. But the transistor radio at first remained a mystery so far as the meaning of the numbers was concerned.

Since secrecy surrounded the search for evidence that was being gathered, there was no way for anyone at the Penitentiary to know that the radio contained Ray's inmate number.

Warden Swenson said the F.B.I. had not come to the prison in regard to the radio until about a month after Ray's capture.

"They took the electric stylus with them to determine under laboratory analysis if it was the exact one which was used to etch the numbers," he said.

Ray is serving a 99-year term for the King murder.

Discusses 'New Information'

A Memphis lawyer who in-

vestigated the slaying of Dr. King conferred yesterday with lawyers from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. on what the Memphis attorney called "new information."

The lawyer, Russell X. Thompson, said the day-long discussion had been held to evaluate his findings and see if they "can be raised to the dignity of evidence."

He said: "I have conveyed most if not all of this information to the F.B.I. and other law enforcement agencies. Now we are putting our heads together to evaluate the information and decide what, if anything, to do about it."

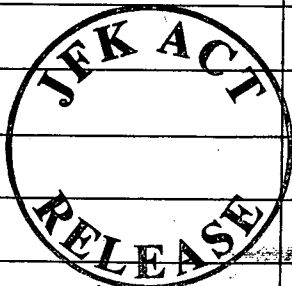
Both Mr. Thompson and defense fund attorneys refused to give details about their talks.

Mr. Thompson said the talks would resume this morning. Mr. Thompson was hired with two private investigators by Ray and Ray's first attorney, Arthur J. Hanes Sr. Hanes was later dismissed by Ray, who hired another attorney, Percy Foreman.

Mr. Thompson was accompanied to the fund's office by a private detective, John Mitchell, whose business card identified him as a former F.B.I. agent and now the director of the Memphis-based State Patrol-Research Company.

Also attending the meeting were Jack Greenberg, counsel in the fund, and James Nabrit, Norman Thomas and Michael Meltsne, staff lawyers.

Mr. Greenberg said Thompson had come to New York at his



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